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CHDS grad leads hate crimes unit in the Big Apple

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CHDS grad leads hate crimes unit in the Big Apple

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Brian Seals

As he oversees hate crime investigations in the nation's largest city [New York City Police Department](#) Captain Mark Molinari is armed with a master's degree education from the [Naval Postgraduate School](#) Center for Homeland Defense and Security.

Only a few weeks into the job, business is unfortunately booming for Molinari, who began the position overseeing the department's Hate Crime Task Force in March. As of the middle of the month, the city had seen 113 hate crimes compared with 375 all of 2015.

He comes to the new role after 4½ years as a Zone Captain in the Special Victims Division of the Detective Bureau, overseeing all sex crime and child abuse investigations in Brooklyn, Queens, and Staten Island. As the Commanding Officer of the Hate Crime Task Force, which also falls under the Special Victims Division. His goals include revisiting some cold cases he has identified that can be followed up to identify or name perpetrators. He would like to add five investigators to his 25-person team and revisit record keeping and statistical analysis as the department provides much-sought data to the federal government, the city and advocacy groups.

"Hate crimes are a homeland security issue as acts of terror are hate crimes at the most basic level," Molinari noted. "Terrorism is selecting a target based on an identity class. Hate crimes, like terror acts, instill fear into communities and cause trepidation in continuing day-to-day functions and activities."

New York State Law is classified as a "special offense" in which victims are chosen at least in part because of a perception regarding "race, color, national origin, ancestry, gender, religion, religious practice, age, disability, or sexual orientation," "whether the belief or perception is correct." When the city's police officers respond to a possibly biased incident they notify the sergeant, who notifies the captain. The captain deems the incident to be possibly biased or non-biased. As checks and balances system, the captain always notifies the Hate Crime Task Force to look into the case.

"We also get cases from liaisons at the District Attorney's offices, the [FBI](#), the [State Police](#), advocacy groups, elected officials, and media," he noted.

While all crime affects the victim, hate crimes extend to the families or communities of the victim, he noted. Moreover, hate crimes affect all those who associate themselves with the identity that was targeted, he said. For instance, a swastika painted on a synagogue instills fear into all those who pass or use that synagogue. Another case in point is a person assaulted because of their religious garb makes all those who associate with that religion afraid to walk the streets.

There are two major challenges to investigating hate crimes. Victims of some identities or communities fear police interaction, meaning such crimes are more likely to go unreported. Secondly, since most hate crimes are property crimes, they are harder to identify perpetrators because of lack of witnesses.

What distinguishes it from other crimes is that a hate crime hinges on motivation. That's where the rigors of CHDS



NYPD Captain Mark Molinari

courses and classroom debate are beneficial. [The Unconventional Threat to Homeland Security](#) and [Multi-Disciplinary Approaches to Homeland Security](#) courses have been particularly applicable he said, and the concept of [Social Identity Theory](#) also factors into his work.

“I often tell people that this is the grayest job I have ever had,” Molinari noted. “When investigating any crime, motivation is not usually a factor, but in hate crimes motivation is a key component in how it’s assigned, how it is investigated, and arrest charges/sentencing. The 18 months of intense critical thinking classes at CHDS, shaped my mind to think differently and deeper to come up with a solution.”

See also: CHDS master’s degree thesis, [“Implementing Compstat Principles into Critical Infrastructure Protection and Improvement.”](#)

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